DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 784 RC 014 134

AUTHOR Bradley, Rose M.
TITLE A Special Services Approach for Small Rural School Districts.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT Independent National Rural Project Newsletter; v4 n2 p2-3 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Models; *Rural Education; Rural Schools; Services; *Special Education; *Special Education Teachers; Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS PF Project; *Small School Districts

ABSTRACT

A strategy for managing an effective special services program in a small, rural school (Wilson Creek, Washington) is described. The approach is built upon the nucleus of a full time special education teacher who coordinates schoolwide services. Responsibilities of this position include assisting teaching staff in mainstreaming special education students, insuring that the requirements of each state and federal program are met, and supervising instructional aides working in the Title I and remediation programs. Also instrumental in the program are the school's two administrators, the library media specialist, classroom teachers, and aides. (LP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED239784

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Rose M. Bradley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A SPECIAL SERVICES APPROACH

FOR SMALL RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by
Rose M. Bradley, M.Ed.
Administrative Assistant
Wilson Creek School District
Washington State

RC 014134

Taken From:

NRP: National Rural Research and Personnel Preparation Project
Center for Innovation and Development
College of Human Development and Learning
Murray State University
Murray, Kentucky 42071

Vol. 4, No. 2
Summer, 1983

A SPECIAL SERVICES APPROACH FOR SMALL RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Rose M. Bradley, M.Ed.
Administrative Assistant
Wilson Creek School District
Washington State

Small rural school districts have identified the provision of adequate support services for students as a problem. Efforts are under way to develop models and programs which will allow rural school district options for providing special education, Title I, Regular, Title I Migrant, and Remediation services for rural students and satisfying educational concerns of classroom teachers. The purpose of this article is to share an approach which has proven effective in the Wilson Creek School District in Wilson Creek, Washington.

Wilson Creek is a rural K-12 school district in eastern Washington. The total school enrollment is 115 students, with the elementary teacher having two grades in one room. The entire K-12 program is housed in a single building.

The special education building was operated by a half-time teacher aide. The teacher was serving two districts which required a minimum of 30 minutes driving time between districts one way. Consequently, schedules were often developed to meet the availability of the special education teacher.

The district also offered Title I Regular, Title I Migrant, and Remediation programs. There was no evidence of coordinated planning between these support programs. Each of the support programs operated independently, following existing statutory guidelines. There was a superintendent/principal responsible for the entire educational program. The support programs were structured to operate independently.

Problem Addressed

The strategy in this article involved managing an effective special services program in a small rural school with the effective and legal integration of each discrete program. A need for coordination and planning in the support programs of the Wilson Creek School District had been identified. Concerns developed as confusion interfered with satisfaction of student needs.

Reassessment of the entire support structure was undertaken. Discussion with the school board indicated a desire and willingness to hire a full-time special education teacher, as opposed to sharing one with the neighboring district. Building upon the nucleus of a full-time, qualified special education teacher, a coordinated aproach was designed to serve any student in need and offer teachers assistance with developing individual programs for students. This approach is effective and may serve as a model for other small rural school districts.

The Approach

To create an effective model for a small rural school, it is first necessary to analyze the strengths of the existing institution and to tailor it to the needs of the community and region (Dunn, 1977). The keys seem to be for rural schools to determine what resources are needed to enable the teachers and the school to provide optimum services to all the children and to strive together to design a program unique to that school. The following is a description of the special services approach developed and implemented.

The administration consists of a superintendent and principal. These individuals are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the total school program of which the special services is a part.

The person responsible for the learning resource center serves the building with library and media assistance. He/she has a direct line to the administration and has access to each classroom in order to provide resources to supplement classroom instruction. The library media specialist may seek assistance from the special services coordinator or become a referral agent.

Due to the uniqueness of a rural school, an individual teacher may teach several subject areas and grade levels. These teachers are the major referral source and utilize the special services coordinator as a consultant. The classroom teachers are an important link in the special services given to the students who are mainstreamed. They serve as members of the multidisciplinary team which develops the individual education plan for the student. Since Wilson Creek is small and self-contained, the lines of communication between the regular classroom teacher and the support programs are strong.

The instructional component of the Title I Regular, Title I Migrant, and Remediation programs is implemented by instructional aides under the supervision of the special services coordinator. This model involves the special education teacher serving as the special services coordinator. This person is positioned on the administrative level because he/she is responsible for the administration of all special services programs. Federal and state grant applications and budget requests fall into the line of responsibility for the special services coordinator.

Supervision of aides is a crucial part of this job, which at times requires staff training and inservice for new personnel. The education plans are finalized with the coordinator and implemented by the instructional aides. The special services coordinator has access to all classrooms to provide assistance to those students in need; to assist the regular classroom teacher in developing special programs to meet the needs of their students; and to coordinate the mainstreaming process. The special services coordinator has the responsibility for assuring that the requirements unique to each state and federal program are met.

The position of special services coordinator originated out of the need for a certificated person to supervise the operation and implementation of special services programs. Three separate funding sources are used to pay the special services coordinator. One source is the special education money generated by handicapped students in the district. This does not fully fund a full-time employee, so the Title I Migrant program funds the special services coordinator to be the teacher in charge of the instructional aide in the Migrant program. The portion funded by the school district allows the special services coordinator to direct and supervise the Title I and Remediation programs in the district. Thus, the position of the special services coordinator was created.

The special services coordinator plays an important part in the mainstreaming process, since this person is continually sought out by the teachers and staff for advice in testing, designing specialized programs, and behavioral management techniques. The special services coordinator becomes a vital link for developing a program which provides the least restrictive environment for the child to learn and is manageable for the classroom teacher. The special services coordinator must work closely with the regular classroom teacher.

teachers no longer had to question which program to approach for assistance. The special services coordinator became the one person responsible for receiving referrals and coordinating the placement of the children into the various special service programs.

Summary

Schools are constantly searching for methods to improve the effectiveness of education. Funding, methods, and personnel are a few areas of concern. As the literature indicates, small rural schools have not received equal opportunity. There are more small schools than there are large urban schools. It is time for educators to put forth the effort to recognize their unique needs and explore solutions.

The staff, administration, and school board of Wilson Creek, Washington, have understood this need and have responded. They have designed an approach to meet a problem which is common to many small schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Dunn, F. Choosing smallness: An examination of the small school experience in rural America in J.P. Sher (Ed.) Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977.

For Your Information

Are you looking for prototype contracts (addressing issues such as liability and pay) regarding the provision of vocational instruction for students with emotional handicaps? P.J. McClain of Missouri LINC, University of Missouri-Columbia, informs us that each state has a contract form available through the State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. He suggests checking with your local board first, then contacting the Missouri Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, should you need further assistance.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Special Education Software Competition

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is sponsoring a national contest to identify the best microcomputer software with applications for special education. Contest entries must include working computer programs on disks or cassettes. Software must be usable by microcomputers commonly available in schools. Mail all entries by October 15, 1983. For further information contact: Software Search, Department of Field Services, CEC, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. SpecialNet User Name: CEC Reston.

ACRES Rural Bulletin Board

The American Council on Rural Special Education announces the "Rural" Bulletin Board, an electronic communication system that is a part of SpecialNet. It was established in March 1983 in response to desires of ACRES members to instantly send and receive messages regarding problems, effective strategies, and events related to serving handicapped students in rural areas. Anyone having access to SpecialNet may use the ACRES "Rural" Bulletin Board by checking the Bulletin Board named "Rural". Items you will consistently find displayed on the Bulletin Board include information about:

—conferences related to rural special education
—Samples of successful practices appropriate for specific types of rural subcultures
—items related to the ACRES Rural Job Referral Services
—federal and state policies with importance for rural handicapped individuals
—access to the ACRES Resource Network (linking members with other members with related areas of expertise)
—lists of recent publications concerning rural special education.

SpecialNet users may contact the ACRES Office directly via the user code "ACRES" or write to ACRES, Box 2470, Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071.

Assistance with Special Education Technology

A new project funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (SEP) was developed to give technical assistance regarding the appropriate use of technology in special education. EduTech's activities include preparation of bibliographies, fact sheets, resource guides, articles, and reports on advances in technology coupled with their impact on special education. SpecialNet provides access to the EduTech electronic bulletin board which transmits bibliographic data and fact sheets and is updated bi-weekly. For more information, check the "EduTech" Bulletin Board or contact SpecialNet, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Suite 404E, Washington, D.C. (202/822-7933).